

## Whom do I notify?

Immediately reportable diseases should be called in to the local health department where the patient resides. *A link to help you locate local health departments in New Jersey is on the back panel of this brochure.*



If the local health department is unavailable, or if the patient does not live in New Jersey, the report should be called in to NJDHSS at 609-588-7500 during regular business hours, and 609-392-2020 on nights, weekends, and holidays.

For the diseases that must be reported within 24 hours of diagnosis, use the NJDHSS report form. *The link to this form is on the back panel of this brochure.* This form may be mailed to the local health department at the address listed in the local health department directory.



## What should I tell my patients who have reportable diseases?

For communicable disease control efforts to be maximally effective, health care providers should take time to advise their patients about the legal requirement of disease reporting, what the patient can expect to happen, and how the community may benefit.

Patients who are surprised when they receive a phone call from the local health department about their illness may be less than fully cooperative with the health department, and are often unhappy that their health care provider didn't advise them that they might receive a call from someone at the health department.

Instead of viewing this as a referral for health care follow-up, patients may view it as a breach of confidentiality because they weren't provided the opportunity to understand what is happening and why.

## Useful Links

### Quick Reference Guide to Reportable Communicable Diseases and Work-Related Conditions in New Jersey

[http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/reportable\\_diseases.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/reportable_diseases.pdf)

### New Jersey Administrative Code Title 8, Chapter 57

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/njoal>  
(N.J.A.C. updated quarterly)

### Local Health Departments in New Jersey

<http://www.nj.gov/health/lh/directory/lhdselectcounty.shtml>

### Communicable Disease Report Form

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/forms/cds-1.pdf>

### NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service

<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd>

### HIPAA Privacy Rule & Public Health: Guidance from CDC and US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su5201a1.htm>



## Reporting Communicable Diseases

*To protect the public's health*



## The health care provider's role in reporting infectious diseases and outbreaks



New Jersey Department of  
Health & Senior Services  
Public Health Services Branch  
Communicable Disease Service  
PO Box 369  
Trenton, NJ 08625



By working together, we can help improve  
the health of all residents of New Jersey.



## What is a reportable communicable disease?

A "reportable communicable disease" refers to any disease listed in NJ Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.), Title 8, Chapter 57. *See the links on the back panel of this brochure.*

Per these regulations, it is the responsibility of health care providers to notify the local health department where the patient resides.



## How and why were these diseases selected?

The NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) received recommendations from several national organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. NJDHSS also solicited input from New Jersey organizations and interest groups, such as the Medical Society of New Jersey and the New Jersey Hospital Association.

These diseases were selected because actions must be taken to stop further spread of the diseases OR information is needed to evaluate whether existing control measures are working.

Certain diseases must be reported IMMEDIATELY by phone, even if the diagnosis is based only on clinical suspicion. With these diseases there is **NO TIME TO WAIT FOR LABORATORY CONFIRMATION**. Because preventing the spread of these diseases is so important, the good judgment of the health care provider is enough to initiate a public health response.

Other diseases must be reported within 24 hours of diagnosis. Supporting laboratory work is desirable, but for some diseases, a report based solely upon your clinical judgment is acceptable.

Of note, **ALL OUTBREAKS** (suspect or confirmed) must be reported IMMEDIATELY by phone.

## Why is it important for health care providers to report diseases in a timely manner?

The earlier illnesses are reported, the faster public health authorities can act. This allows public health officials to conduct timely investigations and enact prevention and control measures quickly. Such measures may include embargoes of food products, prophylaxis of patient contacts, and closure of public swimming places.



## What information must be in the report?

In addition to the name of the disease and the name of the patient, the regulations also require the reporting of the patient's address and telephone number; the patient's age or birth date, race, sex, and ethnicity; date of illness onset; results of laboratory tests which support the diagnosis; and, in the case of sexually transmitted diseases, any treatment provided.



## Does HIPAA allow disease reporting?

The HIPAA Privacy Rule permits covered entities (i.e., health care providers, laboratories, and hospitals) to disclose protected health information, without authorization, to public health authorities who are legally authorized to receive such reports for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability.

Examples of public health authorities include the state and local health departments in NJ, and the CDC. *See the HIPAA link on the back panel of this brochure for more information.*

## What do health departments do with this information?

Health departments use the reports in a variety of ways. First and foremost, the reports are used to trigger prompt implementation of disease control and prevention measures. When reports are compiled and analyzed, they may provide public health authorities with important information about a disease, including trends, risk factors, and whether existing disease prevention activities are working.



## Why do I have to report when the laboratory has already reported the case?

For immediately reportable diseases, the answer is simple. The health care provider will be the first person to make the diagnosis or be the first health care professional to suspect that the illness is occurring. For the remaining reportable diseases, the health care provider often has clinical information that the laboratory doesn't have -- information that often is critical for public health authorities to perform their duties in a timely and efficient fashion.



## What is expected from a health care provider during a disease investigation?

Health care providers may be contacted by the local health department and asked to provide clinical or diagnostic information regarding a patient. They may also be asked to collect additional clinical specimens to confirm the diagnosis of cases and to participate in prevention activities including administering vaccines and prophylactic antibiotics.